

Faculties' Perceptions of Ethics in the Accounting Curriculum: A Japanese Study

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Abstract

The primary purposes of this study was to explore the perceptions of accounting faculties toward ethics education, the extent of ethics coverage and reasons why ethics should (or should not) be taught in Japanese tertiary schools. The present research also attempted to investigate possible associations between a faculties' intention to incorporate ethics and reasons why ethics should be taught at all. Data for this research was collected from faculties that teach accounting related subjects in Japanese tertiary schools. Of 300 members of the Japanese Accounting Association (JAA) randomly selected from the JAA member's Directory, 67 responses were participated in this survey research in September, 2009. The results of this study indicate that over 90 percent of accounting faculties believed that ethics should be taught in the accounting curriculum. In terms of how ethics should be taught the survey participants believed in a more holistic approach, which would encompass the benefits of teaching ethics as both a stand-alone course and integrating it with other relevant courses. This outcome was in direct contrast to the approaches preferred from the results of previous studies undertaken overseas. Of particular concern in the results was the fact that the survey revealed that only 55.2 percent of respondents actually intend to incorporate ethics into their accounting courses in the foreseeable future. Sensitivity to corporate scandals was also found to be quite profound in Japan compared to other countries. This research successfully adds value to the perceptions of Japanese accounting faculties on ethics education being taught in Japan, an area which has received very little interest by researchers to date.

Keywords: *Accounting Ethics, Ethics Education, Stand-alone courses; Accounting Curriculum, Japan*

Introduction

It has often been reported that the recent barrages of corporate scandals and

accounting failures have had a dramatic effect on the Japanese economy. For instance, Livedoor Co., Ltd, once a gigantic Internet service provider based in Tokyo, and having achieved “Enronesque” success suddenly collapsed in 2002 due to a maze of stock splits, stock swaps and other falsified accounting incidents (Pontell and Geis, 2007). Unethical incidents such as this have triggered the accounting sector to address the importance of accounting ethics and indeed encourage an increased coverage of ethics in the accounting curriculum (Urasaki, 2007). Reactions to increased ethics education have often been observed and researched in other countries, specifically, research, based on educators’ opinions regarding ethics education (e.g. Blanthorne et al., 2007; Beggs and Dean, 2007; Dean and Beggs, 2006 in the United States; Ghaffari et al., 2008; Bampton and Maclagan, 2005; Bampton and Cowton, 2002 in the United Kingdom). Compared to previous studies, research exploring Japanese accounting faculties’ views on ethics education is particularly lacking. This lack of research has its roots in the unique structure of accounting education in Japan particularly at the pre-qualification stage where it has proved difficult for faculty staff to become involved in the development of the ethics education.

Firstly one of the distinguishing aspects regarding this issue is the fact that ethics training does not form part of the formal accounting education process in Japan. Ethics module/s are not a pre-requisite/s for sitting the Certified Public Accountants (CPA) examination. Instead, ethics training is only provided at the post-qualification stage through Continuous Professional Education (CPE) provided by the Japanese Institute of Certified Public Accountants (JICPA, 1998)). It is interesting to note that the latest report from the National Association of States Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) in the United States (US) strongly endorses ethics education at the introductory level. For example, CPA candidates in the US must complete at least one course in business ethics with an option of incorporating ethics with other courses as a pre-requisite for

sitting the uniform CPA examination (Mintchik and Farmer, 2009; NASBA Education Committee, 2007). This has led US accounting academics to become more active, by incorporating ethics into the accounting curriculum at the pre-qualification stage compared to their Japanese colleagues. Significant research has been conducted in the US to determine the role of a faculty's perception has on the incorporation of ethics into accounting curriculums (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Beggs and Dean, 2007; Dean and Beggs, 2006).

Secondly, the JICPA has no formal or informal networks with the Japanese educational community in terms of developing accounting curriculums for tertiary schools. The lack of such networking has also prevented ethics from being incorporated into the accounting curriculum. In comparison, the UK professional bodies such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) have their own ethics curriculum and examination syllabus that students must successfully complete prior to being accepted into the profession. The latest versions of these syllabuses suggest that ethics will be embedded at relevant stages in each module and this will provide accounting students with a framework to base on their ethical decision making skills (ICAEW, 2007; ACCA, 2007). Although these impacts may not be direct, their importance is reflected in the fact that the professional bodies in the UK will offer exemptions from some of their own examinations to university graduates (Ghaffari, et al., 2008). If professional bodies do include ethics in their syllabi as suggested, then UK accounting faculties will also incorporate ethics into their curriculum (Ghaffari, et al., 2008) in order to seek articulation. This sensitivity in ethics education across the UK has received widespread research particularly in terms of how UK accounting faculties will respond to these curriculum changes (Ghaffari, et al., 2008; Bampton and Maclagan, 2005; Bampton and Cowton, 2002).

Compared to research investigating ethics' education in other countries little coverage has appeared in the literature emanating from Japan to date. Of this only one reported study by Urasaki (2006) has explored the accounting and business ethics courses existing in Japanese undergraduate schools. This study found that the majority of Japanese undergraduate courses rely on ethics education being incorporated voluntarily into certain accounting subjects at the discretion of their instructors (Urasaki, 2006). From this outcome it is assumed that ethics is incorporated into the tertiary accounting curriculum in Japan based upon the personal beliefs on how their instructors perceive the rationale to teach (or not to teach) ethics.

Given this background, the current study attempts to provide a more comprehensive overview on Japanese accounting academics' perceptions on why and to what extent ethics should (or should not) be included in their accounting curriculum. It is expected that such an understanding will place Japanese accounting educators in a better position to break through the obstacles confronted by them in order to accommodate more ethics education into their tertiary accounting programs. In addition, the outcomes from this research will assist policy makers, standard setters, regulatory authorities and professional bodies on a clearer direction for accounting ethics education.

In the next section, previous literature in this research area is critically reviewed in order to develop our research questions. Discussion then takes place on the methodology used and research design in order to undertake our data collection. Statistical analyses then follows with the outcomes presented in the Results section. Interpretation and Discussion precedes the conclusion section, which provides brief summaries and suggestions, together with some limitations of this current study.

Literature Review and Research Questions

Faculty Intentions to Incorporate Ethics into the Curriculum

Over the previous few decades, literature has often discussed whether ethics should be incorporated into the curriculum (e.g. Madison and Schmidt, 2006; Adkins and Radtke, 2004; Alam, 1999; McNair and Milan, 1993; Cohen and Pant, 1989; Karnes and Sterner, 1988). This cluster of research used questionnaire-type surveys in an attempt to investigate actual opinions and attitudes towards ethics education among accounting educators and special interest groups from the accounting profession. More recently Blanthorne et al. (2007) addressed perceived opinions held by accounting academics in the US and reported that 95 percent of participants agree that ethics should be taught to accounting students. Using a similar approach, Ghaffari et al. (2008) focused on accounting educators in the UK in an attempt to identify their views towards ethics education in accounting. This survey found that 80.6 percent of participants indicated that ethics had already been incorporated into their curriculum in one form or another. Another study by Bampton and Cowton (2002) used a comprehensive survey to investigate the views and beliefs of ethics education among the UK universities and similar institutions involved in delivering management accounting. Their study reported that 86.6 percent of respondents agreed that ethics teaching has a significant impact on improving students' ethical abilities (20.1 percent significantly agreed and 66.5 percent agreeing with limitations). From a more global perspective, Jackling et al. (2007) investigated the perceptions of 66 professional accounting bodies globally with regard to a number of issues in ethics confronted by accountants. The authors of this latter research concluded that the majority of professional bodies believed that ethics should be taught as part of a pre-qualifying program. In contrast, as previously mentioned, few studies have been undertaken in Japan

to examine educators' views on whether or not ethics should be taught in accounting.

The prior study in Japan by Urasaki (2006) used a survey based approach to assess ethics coverage in the accounting curriculum in Japanese tertiary schools. 66 universities were surveyed in order to identify the number of stand-alone ethics courses and courses where ethics was incorporated. The study found that 16 institutions offered stand-alone ethics courses commonly referred to as business or professional ethics in the undergraduate accounting curriculum. Although Urasaki (2006) successfully identified the number of ethics courses existing in the tertiary schools of Japan, a faculties' perception on whether ethics should be taught in the accounting curriculum at all remains unclear.

From a technical perspective the teaching of ethics has often been addressed in terms of its teaching methodology. Prior literature has indicated that the recent trend has been to integrate it with other accounting courses (Ghaffari et al., 2008; AACSB International, 2007; Blanthorne et al., 2007; Alam, 1999). The reason given for using this method has been to reinforce in students that ethics should not be considered in isolation but rather as an integral part of the accounting profession (Loeb and Rackness, 1992; Mintz, 1990; Loeb, 1988). In contrast, other studies have supported the strength and necessity for stand-alone courses in ethics. Fisher et al. (2007) for instance proposed that the deficiency of recent ethics education could be remedied by the insistence that stand-alone courses be delivered early in the accounting curriculum. This teaching method has received support because it is based on the assumption that stand-alone courses send important signals to accounting students that the study of ethics is important (Gray et al, 1994). From an alternate viewpoint Swanson (2004) asserts that the choice between a stand-alone and integrated course is a false dichotomy and proposes a more holistic approach, which would encompass various aspects and benefits of both teaching methodologies.

In light of the above discussions and coupled with the lack of prior studies in Japan it is not known to what extent accounting educators perceive whether ethics should be taught in tertiary schools. By indentifying educators' perception on the need for ethics in the accounting curriculum, one could then recommend its best method of delivery. Moreover, the present study also attempts to address the future intention of incorporating ethics into the accounting curriculum by the accounting faculties of Japan. Such analyses will allow us to compare the Japanese results with the same cluster of studies that have occurred overseas. Upon this framework the following two research questions were developed.

Research Question 1. Should ethics be taught by accounting faculties in Japan and if so how should it be taught?

Research Question 2. To what extent do accounting faculties intend to incorporate ethics into their accounting curriculum?

Factors Influencing the Incorporation of Ethics into the Accounting Curriculum

Whether or not accounting educators should teach ethics in their curriculum is likely to be influenced by personal opinions. The reasons for the teaching or non-teaching of ethics have been researched repetitively in previous literature (Ghaffari et al., 2008; Blanthorne et al., 2007; Madison and Schmidt, 2006; Evans and Marcal, 2005; Adkins and Radtke, 2004; Lawson, 2002; McNaire and Milan, 1993; Cohen and Pant, 1989). Common factors emerging in the literature that have influenced the faculties' perception towards teaching of ethics are discussed in the following five sub- sections.

(1) Social pressure and the external impact of teaching ethics

Various forms of social and external pressure have been considered decisive

factors in encouraging educators to teach ethics in the accounting curriculum. For example, Evans and Marcal (2005) examined perceptions of ethics education among Deans of the AACSB member schools in the US and found that the majority of respondents (80%) believed that the recent high-profile business scandals were the catalyst that placed more emphasis on ethics training in their tertiary schools. From another social aspect, Jackling et al. (2007) surveyed the global professional bodies' attitude towards ethics education and reported a strong demand for ethics training to be facilitated at the pre-qualification stage. This view is supported by Blanthorne et al. (2007), which investigated similar opinions of teaching ethics by accounting academics in the US. They discovered that the strong call for ethics education by external interested parties such as professional bodies assisted educators in the belief that ethics should receive coverage and be taught within the curriculum. These prior studies confirm that such a call for ethics education supports and revitalizes public confidence of the accounting profession. (Ghaffari et al., 2008; Blanthorne et al., 2007; Evans and Marcal, 2005). On the other hand, Beggs and Dean (2007) found that the pressures and impacts from external factors would in no way influence the importance of ethics training in formal education. The authors produced qualitative research via semi-structured interviews and found that US faculties in business schools believe the recent ethics crisis is nothing new and that ethics education was an ineffective way to produce a remedy for this crisis. According to this latter study, it was concluded that external and social events do not necessarily influence a faculty's opinion towards the necessity of teaching ethics in the accounting curriculum.

(2) Efficacy of teaching ethics

The efficacy of teaching ethics is also viewed as an important factor that affects a faculty's opinion on ethics coverage. In accounting literature, various

studies have attempted a quest of ethics training efficacy by using accounting students as their data sample (e.g. O'Leary, 2009; Cooper et al. 2008; Rossouw, 2002). Nevertheless these prior studies have not been very helpful in raising a clear consensus among educators for the need of including ethics in the curriculum. In support of ethics training Evans and Marcal (2005) empirically reported that the majority of respondents, who were Deans of AACSB schools in the US, agreed that business programs should place more emphasis on ethics education and they also believed that courses in ethics are an effective conduit in changing students' ethical attitudes and behaviour. Statistical analysis of this study also found that the recent decline in the teaching of business ethics is not related to the Deans' views on the effectiveness of ethics education. In opposition to ethics training, other studies have found passive evidence suggesting faculties in the business and accounting fields believe ethics cannot be taught effectively. Among these, the research previously mentioned by Beggs and Dean (2007) included an exploratory interview-based survey and found that only a small percentage of business school faculties advocated for the teaching of ethical decision making as a remedy to the decline of business ethics in the community. It is inferred from this study that faculties are not completely convinced that their instructions will affect students' behavior in ethical situations. In fact such faculties preferred increased penalties such as changed legislation and punishment as remedies to the recent corporate ethics violations rather than including ethics in the curriculum. Along a similar line, Blanthorne et al. (2007) found that the efficacy of teaching ethics is viewed as the most significant factor that encourages negative opinions especially for those who believe that ethics should not be included in the curriculum.

(3) Relevancy of teaching ethics

The actual relevance of teaching ethics in accounting is also considered very

important in the formation of opinions by faculty members. Although the teaching of ethics may change one's opinion it is not certain if this is applicable in the accounting context. Thus, empirical evidence is required to ascertain the relevancy of ethics training for accounting students and such evidence may impact on a faculty's perception of ethics training. For example, Earley and Kelly (2004) examined the relevance of ethics interventions in promoting students' moral development in an auditing course. In this research, the authors successfully observed that ethical intervention did assist in increasing ethical abilities particularly when students attempted to solve questions from accounting case studies. In contrast, Ponemon (1993), in a seminal prior study, used an empirical technique applying Kohlberg's (1969) theory and Rest's (1986) Defining Issues Test (DIT) and found that accounting students who received ethics instructions had not increased their ethical abilities. The author assumed that this unfavorable result was associated with the instrument adopted, where the context was too specialized based only on accounting and auditing and so did not measure ethical abilities of students who had simply studied general business ethics. In a similar vein, other prior literature has argued that various focal attributes would affect a faculty's view on the relevance (or not) of providing ethics education in the accounting curriculum. For example, Bampton and Cowton (2002) reported that the most common reason for not teaching ethics in accounting was due to the instructors' view that they were not equipped with the necessary skills required to teach it. According to this study, a faculty's reluctance to teach ethics is strongly related to their lack of knowledge in ethics. In addition, other research has addressed and found mixed results regarding the validity of course contents which has included the code of professional conduct (Green and Weber, 1997; IFAC, 2003) as well as professionally moral obligations and guidance (Blanthorne et al., 2007). Adkins and Radtke (2004) also reported that there is little consensus in the literature on

a faculty's perception towards the relevance of ethics training in the accounting program. Further, on where ethics is actually taught in the accounting curriculum is another controversial issue (Ghaffari et al., 2008; Blanthorne et al., 2007; Fisher et al., 2007; Bean and Bernardi, 2005) as is who we should use to teach it (Adkins and Radtke, 2004; Bampton and Cowton, 2002), as seen in the above section.

(4) Informal education external to the curriculum

The importance of informal education in developing students' ethical abilities has been referred to in some literature including that of Dean and Bernardi (2007), Bampton and Maclagan (2005) and Conroy and Emerson (2004). These studies have recommended further consideration should be given on how students develop their ethical reasoning abilities including the role of families and religious institutions before they enter the world of business. Bampton and Maclagan (2005) also question the inclusion of ethics in the formal curriculum on the grounds that people should receive moral guidance from other institutions in society such as family, community and the church. The authors of this study did however call for additional ethics education to be included in the curriculum in an attempt to address the recent amoral societal issues and adverse media coverage. Furthermore, Conroy and Emerson (2004) investigated whether or not religiosity in business students is correlated with their perceptions of ethical behaviour and found no empirical evidence in support of such a relationship even after students had completed an ethics course. This result asserts to some extent that factors outside the formal education system may be more influential when considering the efficacy of teaching ethics.

(5) Constraints in the teaching of ethics

Prior literature have also argued that other restraining attributes may affect a

faculty's view towards the teaching of ethics such as the lack of time to prepare lessons, poor teaching resources (Blanthorne et al., 2007; Adkins and Radtke, 2004) and a lack of motivation by accounting instructors (Bernardi et al., 2008; Bernardi, 2005; 2004).

Compared to the previous reported studies, questionnaire based research seeking faculties' perceptions on the teaching of accounting ethics are relatively new in Japan. Of prominence is the research by Urasaki (2006) who conducted an interviewed-based survey to identify the reasons why Japanese accounting faculties do not provide courses related to ethics. According to these results, 27.7% of respondents stated that they did not wish to offer stand-alone ethics courses as they believed an integration type approach is more suitable to their accounting curriculum. Interestingly 25.5% of respondents expressed their reluctance to teach ethics in the classroom because of their lack of knowledge. Despite the findings provided by Urasaki (2006), this prior study did not address a faculty's opinions or perceptions on ethics education regardless of whether they offered ethics in some form or not. Moreover, the idiosyncratic queries that simply focused on the reasons for not providing ethics courses have left serious omissions in this Japanese study. To investigate these supplementary flaws, the present study developed the following research questions in an attempt to focus more comprehensively on these issues.

Research Question 3: What factors do Japanese accounting faculties perceive as important in the teaching of ethics in the accounting curriculum?

Research Question 4: Which factors encourage (or discourage) accounting faculties to incorporate ethics into their courses?

Research Methodology

Developing the Questionnaire and Research Design

The current research construct consists of a questionnaire that explores the four research questions developed in the above section. Initially, this study investigated perceptions of 1) whether ethics should be taught by Japanese accounting faculties and 2) to what extent these faculties intend to incorporate ethics into their courses. For the first perception, query items contained in the first section of the questionnaire sought faculty's opinions on the need to teach ethics and if they believed that there was a need for a particular teaching method to be employed. Respondents were asked to choose one of four options - Do not teach ethics (NON); Teach a stand-alone ethics course (STA); Integrate ethics into other accounting courses (INT) or apply a holistic approach by using both stand-alone and integrated courses simultaneously (HOL). As for the second perception query, our questionnaire prepared a survey item seeking respondents' views of incorporating ethics by using a five-point Likert scale anchored one for strongly disagree to five for strongly agree that ethics should be incorporated into the curriculum.

The present research also examined perceived opinions among Japanese accounting faculties on why ethics should (or not) be included in the curriculum. In an attempt to address this question, our questionnaire applied 14 survey items that were duplicated from Blanthorne et al. (2007) and are displayed in Table 1 below. The original study of Blanthorne et al. (2007) created this list from past survey and opinion literature on ethics, regulatory discussions and from the popular press including articles by Evans and Marcal (2005), Adkins and Radtke (2004), Lawson (2002), McNair and Milam (1993), Cohen and Pant (1989) and Karnes and Sterner (1988) in order to evaluate respondents' possible reasons for the teaching or not teaching of ethics. The participants in the current survey

Table 1: Reasons for teaching Ethics

	Item
REASON1	Ethical development is crucial to the accounting profession.
REASON2	Public trust needs to be reestablished due to recent accounting scandals.
REASON3	The profession may lose the right to regulate itself if ethical lapses continue.
REASON4	Students do not seem to be getting adequate ethical training.
REASON5	Very few accounting faculties are willing to teach ethics.
REASON6	Demands for teaching ethics in the curriculum are merely a public relations response to recent accounting scandals.
REASON7	Students' ethical awareness has declined over the years.
REASON8	Accounting education is focused on the "right" answer and does not prepare students to make ethically sensitive decision.
REASON9	Very few accounting faculties are qualified to teach ethics.
REASON10	The current demands of the accounting curriculum leave little or no time to teach ethics.
REASON11	Learning ethical values should be left to family, church, etc.
REASON12	Ethical training in the classroom cannot adequately prepare students for "real-world" dilemmas.
REASON13	Ethics cannot be taught.
REASON14	Accounting curriculum is the wrong venue for ethical instruction.

were asked to rank each item on a five-point Likert scale, where a score of one indicated that respondents strongly disagreed with the statement and a score of five indicates that they strongly agreed with the statement. The mean scores for all 14 items were computed, compared and ranked.

From the scores obtained from this survey, the present study also attempted to identify the compounded factors from the principal component analysis in an attempt to reduce the number of perceived factors or reasons for teaching ethics. These compounded factors derived from the principal component analysis were then used as the independent variables in the ensuing multiple regression analysis. This multiple regression analysis was undertaken in order to investigate the role of perceived reasons for teaching ethics and to seek a possible

relationship with a faculty's intention to incorporate ethics into their curriculum. For this regression, the score for a faculty's intention to incorporate ethics was imputed as the dependent variable.

In the final section of the questionnaire subjects were asked some demographic factors including, age, gender, job title, research subject, academic level and CPA work experience in order to provide general characteristics of the sample (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Demographic Data

	<i>n</i> Missing		Classifications				
Age (AGE)			Max.	Min.	Average (Std. Dev)		
	65	2	70	29	46.80 (10.865)		
Gender (GEN)			Male	Female			
	67	0	64 (95.5%)	3 (4.5%)			
Job Title (TIT)			Professor	Others			
	67	0	38 (56.7%)	29 (43.3%)			
Research Subject (SUB)			Bookkeeping	Financial Accounting	Management Accounting	Auditing	Others ^a
	67	0	5 (7.5%)	38 (56.7%)	9 (13.4%)	7 (10.4%)	8 (12.0%)
Academic Level (LEV)			Undergraduate	Accounting Schools	Other Graduate		
	67	0	46 (68.7%)	10 (14.9%)	12 (16.4%)		
CPA Work Experience (EXP)			Without Experience	With Experience			
	67	0	41 (61.2%)	26 (38.8%)			

^a Others consist of three for Environmental Accounting; two for Public Accounting; three for non-respondent.

Data Collection

Data for this exploratory research was collected from faculties that teach accounting related subjects in Japanese tertiary schools. The authors posted hard

copies of the questionnaire to 300 members of the Japanese Accounting Association (JAA) randomly selected from the JAA members' Directory in July 2009. The JAA is the largest accounting academic association in Japan with more than 1,900 members (as at 1 September 2009). Of the 300 questionnaires initially distributed, 76 responses were received by the end of September 2009. Nine of these questionnaires were eliminated due to incompleteness. As a result, data used in this research consisted of 67 responses (providing a 22.33% effective response rate).

From Table 2 it can be seen that the majority of the respondents were males (95.5%), with females totaling only three (4.5%). This gender bias is consistent with the total JAA membership. Of the 67 respondents 56.7 percent were professors, with the remainder being associate professors, lecturers or associate lecturers (TIT). In terms of research interest or subject (SUB), 56.7 percent of respondents were researching issues relating to "Financial Accounting". Other research interests included "Bookkeeping" (7.5%), "Management Accounting" (13.4%) and "Auditing" (10.4%). The remaining research topics for respondents were classified as "Others" (12.0%) and these consisted of three "Environmental Accounting", two "Public Accounting" and three non-responses. As for teaching levels (LEV), 68.7 percent of the total subjects were teaching at the undergraduate level, while 16.4 percent were teaching at the postgraduate level. From the latter 14.9 percent reported that they were teaching accounting in the Accounting Schools. With respect to CPA work experience (EXP), it was also found that 38.8 percent of respondents had, or are currently participating in, CPA work experience while the majority did not have CPA experience (61.2%).

Results

Faculty Intentions to Incorporate Ethics into the Curriculum

Table 3 reports the frequency of the subjects' responses on whether ethics

Table 3: Should ethics be taught and if so where?

Item	Frequency	Percent
Do not teach ethics (NON)	6	9.0%
Teach a stand alone ethics course (STA)	11	16.4%
Integrate ethics into other accounting courses in the curriculum (INT)	22	32.8%
Holistic approach to provide both stand-alone and integrated courses simultaneously (HOL)	28	41.8%
Total	67	100%

should be incorporated and if so where it should be taught. According to Table 3, 91.0 percent of Japanese accounting faculties that participated in this survey agreed that ethics should be included in the accounting curriculum. From these positive responses, the majority (41.8 percent) supported a holistic approach that advocates a combination of both stand-alone and integration with other accounting courses, while 32.8 percent of faculties believed an integration of ethics into other courses in the curriculum was more appropriate. The advocates for the teaching of ethics as a stand-alone course totaled 16.4 percent.

The survey also sought respondents' intention of incorporating ethics into the courses they currently teach. Results as displayed in Table 4, found that over 50 percent of all respondents agreed either strongly or generally to incorporate more ethics contents with their other academic courses in the future (19.4% Strongly Agreed; 35.8% Generally Agreed). In contrast, 20 percent disagreed either strongly or generally on the possibility of future incorporation (9.0% Strongly Disagreed; 11.9% Generally Disagree).

Table 4: Faculty intention to incorporate ethics into the courses

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Mean (Std. Dev.)
I should probably incorporate more ethics into my courses.	6 (9.0%)	8 (11.9%)	16 (23.9%)	24 (35.8%)	13 (19.4%)	3.45 (1.197)

Factors Influencing the Incorporation of Ethics into the Accounting Curriculum

1) Descriptive Analysis

In this study, 14 survey items duplicated from Blanthorne et al. (2007) were included in the questionnaire and sought accounting faculties views on why or why not accounting students should receive ethics training. As shown in Table 5, the mean scores for these 14 items were computed, listed in order and compared with the results of Blanthorne et al. (2007). In summary the results demonstrated that accounting faculties in Japan tend to rate highly and believe favorably in - the importance of ethical development in the profession (REASON1); the need to re-establish public trust after recent accounting scandals (REASON2); the importance to recover the social confidence of self-regulation (REASON3); and addressing the inadequate ethical training of students (REASON4).

At the other end of the spectrum reasons why ethics teaching in accounting was not considered important included - the inadequacy of ethics training to prepare students for real-world dilemmas (REASON12); the impossibility of teaching ethics (REASON13); and the irrelevance of ethics teaching in the accounting curriculum (REASON14). Since these three survey items represent the inferior characteristics of ethics teaching, their lower ratings may inversely reflect respondents' positive reflections towards each of the three reasons.

2) Principle Component Analysis

The principal component analysis was applied in an attempt to extract more meaningful factors from the actual response scores. This analysis was undertaken using the Promax rotation technique with Kaiser normalization in order to assist with the interpretation of potential influential factors. The Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) adequacy value was then used to determine if a correlation

Table 5: Descriptive information of reasons to teach ethics

Item	The Present Study		Blanthorne et al. (2007)	
	Rank	Mean (Std. Dev.)	Rank	Mean (Std. Dev.)
REASON1: Ethical development is crucial to the accounting profession.	1	4.75 (.63)	1	4.46 (.73)
REASON2: Public trust needs to be reestablished due to recent accounting scandals.	2	4.23 (1.08)	2	4.42 (.80)
REASON3: The profession may lose the right to regulate itself if ethical lapses continue.	3	4.06 (1.13)	3	4.14 (.94)
REASON4: Students do not seem to be getting adequate ethical training.	3	4.06 (.95)	4	3.56 (1.05)
REASON5: Very few accounting faculties are willing to teach ethics.	5	3.93 (1.02)	7	3.04 (1.08)
REASON6: Demands for teaching ethics in the curriculum are merely a public relations response to recent accounting scandals.	6	3.72 (.83)	11	2.56 (1.20)
REASON7: Students' ethical awareness has declined over the years.	7	3.60 (1.00)	5	3.36 (1.08)
REASON8: Accounting education is focused on the "right" answer and does not prepare students to make ethically sensitive decision.	8	3.58 (1.03)	6	3.33 (1.07)
REASON9: Very few accounting faculty are qualified to teach ethics.	9	3.52 (.92)	9	2.95 (1.22)
REASON10: The current demands of the accounting curriculum leave little or no time to teach ethics.	10	3.38 (1.20)	8	3.01 (1.25)
REASON11: Learning ethical values should be left to the family, church, etc.	11	3.06 (1.20)	13	2.22 (1.08)
REASON12: Ethical training in the classroom cannot adequately prepare students for "real-world" dilemmas.	12	2.82 (1.21)	10	2.64 (1.12)
REASON13: Ethics cannot be taught.	13	2.33 (1.18)	12	2.48 (1.14)
REASON14: Accounting curriculum is the wrong venue for ethical instruction.	14	1.91 (.98)	14	1.99 (.95)

matrix existed between these compounded factors. This adequacy value was calculated at .718, which indicated a correlation matrix was appropriate for this factor analysis. The results of the principal component analysis are shown in

Table 6. Details of the extracted components, eigenvalues and percentage of variance for each compounded factor are also displayed. Applying the eigenvalues-greater-than-one rule, five factors were screened from the 14 survey items as replacements for the original variables. In the process of this analysis, items with scores greater than .45 were regarded as a loading for each compounded factor. The factor scores for faculties' perceptions produced 67.620 percent of cumulative percentages of variance.

All five loading clusters used in this analysis included focal factors that have been discussed in previous literature. These factors were labeled according to the literature review in the earlier section of this paper. The largest cluster was Public expectation of teaching ethics (EXP), which included the three original items of - ethical development for profession (REASON1); the need to re-establish public trust (REASON2); and the possible loss of self-regulation (REASON3). The second largest cluster, labeled Efficacy of teaching ethics (EFF) which included - the inadequacy of students' receiving ethics training (REASON4); the scarcity of teaching ethics by staff (REASON5) and the intrinsic inadequacy of ethics training (REASON8). The third loading cluster was interpreted and labeled as Relevancy of teaching ethics (REL), which included - the quality of teaching ethics (REASON9); the inadequacy of training for real-world dilemmas (REASON12) and the inadequacy of a suitable teaching venue (REASON14). The fourth and fifth clusters were not loaded with other factors but were represented by each individual survey item. These factors were labeled - Informal education external to the curriculum (INF) and Time constraint of teaching (TIM) which were derived from the importance of informal education by family and religion in ethics (REASON11) and the lack of time for teaching ethics in the accounting curriculum (REASON10) respectively.

The internal reliability of the scores were assessed by the Cronbach alphas for

Table 6: Principal component analysis

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
	Public expectation of teaching ethics	Efficacy of teaching ethics	Relevancy of Teaching ethics	Informal education external to the curriculum	Time constraint of teaching
Items	(EXP)	(EFF)	(REL)	(INF)	(TIM)
REASON1: Ethical development is crucial to the accounting profession.	.744				
REASON2: Public trust needs to be reestablished due to recent accounting scandals.	.868				
REASON3: The profession may lose the right to regulate itself if ethical lapses continue.	.847				
REASON4: Students do not seem to be getting adequate ethical training.		.732			
REASON5: Very few accounting faculties are teaching ethics.		.691			
REASON8: Accounting education is focused on the "right" answer and does not prepare students to make ethically sensitive decision.		.711			
REASON9: Very few accounting faculties are qualified to teach ethics.			.651		
REASON12: Ethical training in the accounting classroom cannot adequately prepare students for "real-world" dilemmas.			.840		
REASON14: Accounting curriculum is the wrong venue for ethical instruction.			.480		
REASON11: Learning ethical values should be left to family, church, etc.				.883	
REASON10: The current demands of the accounting curriculum leave little or no time to teach ethics.					.732
Cronbach Alpha	.820	.546	.650	-	-
Eigenvalues	3.794	2.032	1.310	1.201	1.130
Variance (%)	27.100	14.514	9.354	8.577	8.075

Extraction method: Principle Component Analysis, Rotation method: Promaxtechnique with Kaiser normalization
Factor loading > .45 reported

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was .718 at the less than .01 significant level.

Factors EXP, EFF and REL. The scores for the other two factors, INF and TIM were not calculated because these factors were not compounded from the original survey items. The Cronbach alphas were .820, .546 and .650 in terms of the Factors EXP, EFF and REL, respectively. In general, a score greater than .70 is deemed acceptable. Although the score for Factor two was slightly lower than the acceptable level, some previous studies have accepted similar scores. For the remaining two factors, their Cronbach alpha scores were higher or close to the generally acceptable score of .70. Consequently, the outcomes from the principal component analysis indicated that these five factors appeared quite meaningful with regard to the reasons for the incorporation of ethics into the accounting curriculum by Japanese accounting faculties.

3) Multiple Regression Analysis

The present study also undertook a multiple regression analysis to examine a possible association between a faculty's perception of ethics education and their intention to incorporate ethics training into their courses. For this regression, the five compounded factors (EXP, EFF, REL, INF and TIM) from the principal component analysis were used as the independent variables, and the faculty's intention of incorporating ethics trainings with their courses (ETH) was used as the dependent variable. Accordingly, the multiple regression model was developed as follows.

$$ETH = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 EXP + \beta_2 EFF + \beta_3 REL + \beta_4 INF + \beta_5 TIM + \varepsilon$$

Where:

ETH = The intention to incorporate ethics anchored one for strongly disagree to five strongly agree

EXP = Public expectation of teaching ethics measured as the mean score REASON 1, 2 and 3 originally anchored from one to five

EFF = Efficacy of teaching accounting ethics measured as the mean score for REASON 4, 5 and 8 originally anchored one to five

ERL = Relevancy of teaching ethics measured as the mean score for REASON 9, 12 and 14 originally anchored one to five

INF = Informal education out of curriculum (REASON11) anchored one to five

TIM = Time constraint of teaching in the curriculum (REASON10) anchored one to five

ε = error term

Table 7 provides the result of this regression analysis. Findings included an F-value of 11.816 ($p > .01$) and an adjusted R Square of .458, which indicated a sufficient relationship existed within this analysis model. It was found that EXP had a significant and positive association with the faculties' intention of incorporating ethics trainings at less than .05 level ($t = 2.240$, $p = .029$). REL was also found to have a significant but negative relationship with a faculty's intention at less than .01 level ($t = -4.684$, $p > .01$). No significant findings were obtained from the remaining factors (EFF, INF and TIM) and the dependent variable. The VIF score obtained indicated that multicollinearity is not a significant problem in this model (See Note 2 in Table 7).

The results indicated that the more likely accounting faculties are sensitive to public expectation on the teaching of ethics, the more likely they will incorporate ethics into their courses. On the other hand, the less likely faculties are sensitive to public expectation, the less likely they are willing to incorporate ethics into their courses. Moreover, it was found that educators who hold positive views toward ethics being relevant in the curriculum also have a strong intention of incorporating ethics into their courses, while those who held negative views in this respect were reluctant to incorporate ethics into their courses. Accordingly, the result of this analysis suggests that a faculty's

Table 7: Multiple regression results

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	43.106	5	8.621	11.816	.000 ^a
Residual	43.048	59	.730		
Total	86.154	64			

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t		
(Constant)	4.890	1.150		4.254	.000	
EXP	.331	.148	.240	2.240	.029 ^b	1.352
EFF	-.072	.152	-.045	-.473	.638	1.059
REL	-.726	.155	-.506	-4.684	.000 ^a	1.376
INF	-.061	.094	-.062	-.650	.518	1.079
TIM	-.125	.093	-.128	-1.351	.182	1.068

R = .707, R² = .500, Adjusted R² = .458

^a significant at the 0.01 level, ^b significant at the 0.05 level

Note 1: Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) for independent variables were calculated to examine any multicollinearity issues. VIFs greater than ten can generally indicate a serious multicollinearity problem. The scores for this regression ranged from 1.376 to 1.056, which were sufficiently small enough to reject this concern.

Note 2: One of the important assumptions for linear regression analysis is that the residuals are normally distributed. In this respect, this research examined normality of the residuals. The result reported that the skewness and the kurtosis were .041 and -.730, which were near zero. Therefore these results successfully rejected the normality of the residuals.

perception on both public expectations and the relevance of teaching ethics were found to be the seminal factors that encourage incorporation of ethics into their courses.

Interpretation and Discussion

Faculty Intentions to Incorporate Ethics into the Curriculum

Firstly, the analyses outcome in Table 3 that addressed research question 1

revealed that a total of 91 percent of Japanese accounting faculties participating in this survey believed that ethics should be included in the accounting curriculum. Compared with this result, prior studies overseas have reported conflicting outcomes. Adkins and Radtke (2004) for instance found that only 59.1 percent of accounting faculties in their survey agreed that ethics training would be beneficial to accounting students, while Blanthorne et al. (2007) found that 95 percent of faculties were in favour. Similar to Blanthorne et al. (2007), the present study found a very high percentage of accounting faculties in Japan agreeing that ethics should receive wide coverage in the accounting programs.

Secondly, from all proponents, it was found that 41.8 percent of respondents in the present survey preferred the holistic approach. Such a perceived dominance for the holistic approach was also strongly supported by Swanson (2004) who contended that a holistic approach would encompass the beneficial aspects of both stand-alone and integrated methods. However, other recent surveys present contradictive results. Ghaffari et al. (2008) discovered that accounting faculties in the UK recognize that ethics training are more often embedded within various accounting and auditing courses (75.9%) rather than being provided holistically (20.7%). In the US, Madison and Schmidt (2006) also reported that only 30.5% of chairpersons in the accounting departments supported the holistic approach, compared with 69.5% who favored integrating ethics with other accounting type courses. In contrast to this low support for a holistic approach overseas, this present study found that a holistic approach in ethics teaching is strongly supported by many Japanese accounting faculties.

Thirdly, the results in Table 4 also indicate for research question 2 that 55.2 percent of respondents agree to incorporate more ethics into their accounting courses in the near future. In this respect, prior literature has often emphasized that educators tend to view ethics as not really being part of an accountant's rigorous practical training (e.g. Beggs and Dean, 2007; Boyce, 2006; Adkins

and Radtke, 2004). However, it is likely that Japanese accounting educators as shown in this present study are more supportive of such training. More recently, Blanthorne et al. (2007) found that approximately 70% of their survey participants agreed that they should probably incorporate more ethics into their courses but even these respondents claimed that the ethics coverage in their own courses is inadequate (Blanthorne et al., 2007). Compared to the result of Blanthorne et al. (2007), our Japanese study found a smaller percentage in agreement of ethics coverage. It should be noted here, however, that in Japan accounting faculties receive little pressure from any related parties such as accreditation agencies or professional bodies to teach ethics. This is mainly the result of ethics training being predominately provided to CPA candidates by the JICPA at the post-qualification stage (JICPA, 1998). Despite these structural reasons, the majority of Japanese accounting educators in the present study were found to be in favor of incorporating ethics into their courses. This evidence confirms a strong intention and belief that ethics education is regarded quite highly by Japanese accounting faculties.

Factors Influencing the Incorporation of Ethics into the Accounting Curriculum

To address research question 4, a multiple regression analysis was performed and the results demonstrated that a faculty's perceptions of both public expectation (EXP) and relevancy (REL) for the teaching of ethics were the seminal factors encouraging faculties to incorporate more ethics into their courses. The remaining factors such as the efficacy of teaching ethics (EFF), informal education external to the curriculum (INF) and the time constraint of teaching (TIM) did not produce significant associations with the faculty's intention, although these factors were clustered as meaningful components when applying the principal component analysis that was applied to research question

3. Debate on the social and external factors including public expectation (EXP) are often argued in the literature to determine whether or not they become effective roots enhancing ethical training in the accounting curriculum (Ghaffari et al., 2008; Beggs and Dean, 2007; Jackling et al., 2007; Dean and Beggs, 2006; Evans and Marcal, 2005). Supporting these prior studies, this present Japanese study found that accounting faculties are more willing to include ethics in the curriculum when the sensitivities of public expectation towards ethics education are at their highest.

In terms of public expectations, one of the distinguishing findings from this present study compared to prior studies was that the mean score for REASON 6 - "Demand for teaching ethics in the curriculum is merely a public relations response to recent accounting scandals" was rated significantly higher in this Japanese study than in the Blanthorne et al. (2007) findings. According to Table 5, the Japanese score was ranked as the sixth highest (3.72), while the subjects in Blanthorne et al. (2007) ranked it as the fourth lowest (2.56). Although the attributes for REASON 6 failed to be compounded when the principal component test was applied, such a significant difference reflects that the recent accounting scandals are perceived as very significant reasons for including ethics in the accounting curriculum by Japanese faculties compared to their US counterparts as in Blanthorne et al. (2007). This unique belief by Japanese educators is also in contrast by Beggs and Dean's (2007) findings that insisted that recent corporate scandals and external events did not motivate faculties to incorporate ethics into the curriculum.

The finding from our regression analysis also confirmed that a faculty's positive view towards the relevance of teaching ethics also tends to affect its strong intention of incorporating ethics into courses, while a negative view towards such relevancy tend to discourage attempts to embed ethics in appropriate courses. In general the relevancy of teaching ethics has been argued

from various perspectives (e.g. Blanthorne et al., 2007; Madision and Schmidt, 2006; Earley and Kelly, 2004), but this present research chose to focus on this factor in terms of the quality of teaching ethics (REASON9), inadequacy of training for real-world dilemmas (REASON12) and an inadequate teaching venue (REASON14) because these three attributes were clustered as the loading REL factor under the principal component analysis.

More specifically, whether or not the relevance of each attribute is important in determining a faculty's opinion on ethics education has been addressed by other prior literature. For example, Bampton and Cowton (2002) reports that a greater confidence in teaching ability may reflect a faculty's stronger intention to include ethics and vice versa. In terms of adapting real-world examples, previous research has investigated the validity of certain teaching contents and methods of delivery (Green and Weber, 1997; IFAC, 2003; Blanthorne et al., 2007), but Adkins and Radtke (2004) revealed that there is little consensus in the literature on a faculty's perception towards the relevance of ethics training in the accounting program. The venue for ethics in the curriculum is also a controversial issue in the literature (Ghaffari et al., 2008; Blanthorne et al., 2007; Fisher et al., 2007; Bean and Bernardi, 2005; Adkins and Radtke, 2004; Bampton and Cowton, 2002). These specific attributes were found to be particularly influential when determining a faculty's views regarding ethics being incorporated into the accounting program.

On the other hand, the insignificant result obtained for the "Efficacy of teaching ethics" (EFF) indicated that a faculty's belief in the efficacy of teaching ethics is not associated with any positive intention of incorporating ethics into their courses. This result is interpreted that it is not because faculties are simply desperate for the efficacy of teaching ethics, but because they perceive positively such ethics efficacy regardless of their intention towards its' incorporation. In fact, the mean scores of the component attributes in this factor

(4.06 for REASON4, 3.93 for REASON5 and 3.58 for REASON8) are all quite high. Similarly, the remaining two factors - "Informal education external to the curriculum" (INF) and "Time constraint of teaching ethics" (TIM), which also do not have significant associations with a faculty's intention, were assessed as being relatively neutral with mean scores of 3.06 and 3.38 for REASON11 (INF) and REASON10 (TIM) respectively. Despite the significant impacts of these attributes observed in prior studies (Dean and Bernardi, 2007; Blanthorne et al., 2007; Bampton and Maclagan, 2005; Adkins and Radtke, 2004), our results imply that the impacts of these factors are indifferent when considering accounting faculties' intentions of incorporating ethics.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the extent of ethics coverage and reasons why ethics should (or should not) be included in the Japanese accounting curriculum. Included in this the present research also attempted to investigate possible associations between a faculty's intention to incorporate ethics and reasons why ethics should be taught at all. The results indicate that over 90 percent of accounting faculties in the current survey believed that ethics should be taught in the accounting curriculum. In terms of how ethics should be taught the survey participants believed in a more holistic approach, which would encompass the beneficial aspects of teaching ethics as both a stand-alone course and integrating it with other relevant courses. This research successfully adds value to prior literature in this area by presenting more current and comprehensive findings on the perception towards ethics education by Japanese accounting faculties. The study also found a stronger preference for a holistic approach to the teaching of ethics among Japanese faculties compared with the results from prior studies overseas.

In contrast to the widespread positive perception towards the necessity to

include ethics in the accounting curriculums, our survey revealed only 55.2 percent of respondents actually intend to incorporate ethics into their courses in Japan in the foreseeable future. This percentage is relatively low when we consider the recent result of Blanthorne et al. (2007), who reported nearly 70 percent of US accounting faculties agreed with the necessity of such inclusion. Nevertheless as Japanese accounting faculties become more sensitive to public opinions and expectation on ethics, the more likely they will seek incorporation of it into the curriculum. In addition, a faculty's perception that ethics education is in fact relevant is a driver that will influence their future intention of incorporation. This perception will also be enhanced once staffs realize that they have the ability to teach ethics using their choice of delivery and in suitable curriculum locations.

To reflect the public expectation of ethics within the faculty, more opportunities should be provided to share topical ethical issues not only with accounting academics, but also with those representatives from business, other ethics fields and with the accounting profession including auditors. Given the unique nature of accounting education in Japan, where the study of ethics is neither mandatory for CPA examination nor part of the tertiary accounting curriculum, the linkage between academics and professionals will remain fragile until more constructive networking occurs between these two groups. To address public expectations and sensitivity issues, consideration should be given to the hosting of research workshops and conferences. A belated reform in the educational structure of ethics education will also help develop much stronger links between ethics education and the curriculum. In support of the Jackling et al. (2007) which reported that most worldwide professional bodies believe that ethics should be learned as part of the pre-qualifying programs, this paper also recommends that policy makers in Japan move sections of mandatory ethics training from the post qualification CPE program to the pre-qualification stage

in tertiary schools.

Whether or not faculties perceive ethics education as being a relevant part of the accounting program will depend on how we address the negative perceptions on ethics education that staff currently have in their minds. A possible solution could be to instigate information exchange workshops for accounting educators highlighting how ethics should be developed and delivered in the curriculum. It is assumed that a lack of teaching resources for ethics in Japan discourages instructors exposing ethics to their students. Some material is freely available for educators in public domains. For example these are Ethics Teaching Cases released by the Center for Accounting Ethics, University of Waterloo, Canada (<http://accounting.uwaterloo.ca/ethics/cases.htm> accessed on 18th, March, 2010) and the Ethics Education Toolkit run by IFAC (Cooper et al., 2008; <http://web.ifac.org/publications> accessed on 18th, March, 2010). However, as these resources are usually only provided for in English and as the cases and training materials are very westernized, difficulties could arise when Japanese faculties and their students actually attempt to access and use them. Given that these situations do exist, this current study recommends that accounting faculties in Japan should endeavor to create study groups and use advisors to enthuse faculty staff and organize themed domestic conferences addressing accounting ethics in order to disseminate the relevant issues in ethics education.

This exploratory study is not free from limitations. One major issue could relate to non-response bias. Although there is no evidence to suggest such bias during data collection it should be highlighted that there is a possibility that educators who are in favor of ethics education were the ones more likely to have responded to this survey. Should this be the case then the statistical results obtained may not truly represent the actual views of the total Japanese accounting faculties. In other words the views of the minority who may hold unfavorable view towards ethics education may be under-estimated in the

results. Further effort should be taken to broaden the size and scope of the sample during further research on these issues.

Other limitations that may have influenced our results was the use of cursory comparisons being applied without careful consideration of other external societal or ecological factors. For example, the differences in the favorable response rates for ethics education to be introduced in both Japan and the US may be influenced by not only the general intrinsic call for ethics education but also various external attributes such as cultural traits and legal structures existing in these countries. The present study failed to internalize these factors in the analysis model. Thus, this flaw may have blurred the interpretations.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this paper has contributed to a better understanding on the perceptions and other perceived issues among Japanese accounting faculties of the importance of ethics education in the accounting curriculum.

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